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JEAN BLONDEL

European University Institute, Florence

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BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO (FI)

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European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I-50016 San Domenico (FI)
Italy

THE POLITICAL FACTORS ACCOUNTING FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND THE PARTIES WHICH SUPPORT THEM

J. Blondel

In a previous paper, an attempt was made to map out the types of relationships existing between governments and the parties which support them, at least in competitive and semi-competitive political systems (1). These relationships were found to develop on three different planes, namely in terms of policy initiation and elaboration, of course, but also in terms of the composition of the elite, both party and governmental, as well as in terms of the distribution of favours and patronage.

Party-government relationships can be analysed by reference to two dimensions. One of these reflects the extent to which governments and supporting parties are autonomous from each other; the other assesses how far dependence relationships are characterised by government dominance or by party dominance, with, as an intermediate position, equal and reciprocal influence. These two dimensions are not independent from each other, of course: where there is full autonomy, dependence does not exist. In

practice, however, different 'spheres' or aspects of policy-making may be characterised by different types of government-party relationships: one can therefore legitimately refer to situations of partial autonomy. None the less, it remains true that the whole space defined by the two dimensions is unlikely to be occupied: most real-world relationships will tend to remain within a triangle, of which one summit lies towards the autonomy end of the autonomy-dependence dimension while the other two correspond to the government-dominant and party-dominant ends of the interdependence dimension.

To the extent that governments can be plotted in the space which has just been defined, it becomes possible to describe the precise nature of the relationships which link them to supporting parties. Moreover, as these relationships are likely to vary over time from one government to another in a given country, such a mapping makes it possible to discover the character and extent of the changes which take place; it thus helps to assess whether there are different types of evolutions, a matter which has scarcely been explored so far: we do not know, for instance, whether, in countries with competitive party systems governments tend, over time, to depend more or to depend less on the parties which support them.

A comprehensive and accurate plotting of types of government-party relationships has another aim, however, which is to provide a basis for the examination of the reasons why there is

more or less autonomy between parties and governments as well as why dependence takes some forms rather than others. If it becomes possible to locate specific governments in the two-dimensional space of autonomy and dependence, it becomes also possible to relate certain types of links (or the absence of links) to particular characteristics of the political system. Furthermore, one can see to what extent a particular causal factor combines with another in some cases while it does not others: for instance, while government-party relationships are affected by the nature of the party system, this effect may be different when the broad institutional settings is parliamentary or when it is presidential.

The aim of this paper is two-fold. It is, first, to list the political factors which appear prima facie able to affect the relationship between governments and supporting parties; it is, second, to suggest some hypotheses about the ways in which government-party relationships may be affected by the intervention of these factors. The presentation is conceptual; it is no substitute for an empirical investigation which has to come but which should be helped by the categorisations resulting from this analysis.

The factors which affect government-party relationships fall into two broad groups. One group includes characteristics of the political system which concern the way decisions are processed in political systems. If one moves from the general to the

particular, these characteristics include, at one extreme, the national political institutions and, at the other, the part played by individual actors, and in particular by government leaders and by party leaders. In between, the configuration of the party system, on the one hand, and the characteristics of each of the parties supporting the government, on the other, obviously play a major part. The paper will therefore examine successively the effect (both separate and combined) on government-party relationships of the institutional framework, of the party system, of the structure, bases, and ideology of the parties supporting the government, and of the governmental and party leadership.

The second type of factors relates to the nature of the decisions which are to be taken. We noted earlier that party-government relationships are likely to vary over time: they can indeed vary from cabinet to cabinet because the characteristics of the supporting parties and of the leadership may also vary: but these relationships can also differ in character from one policy field to another: it was pointed out for instance in the paper referred to earlier that the role of parties did not seem to be the same with respect to foreign affairs as with respect to internal matters. Admittedly, this difference may not be due, or be due only to the substance of this distinction: it may be the result of the way decisions have to be taken in these two fields. What needs in any case to be explored is whether decisions taken in the various policy areas are characterised by different forms of government-party relationships. One should also examine

whether there are, so to speak, kinds of more or less conscious trade-offs among the policy fields, whether, for instance, the government is the initiator in some fields while the party (or parties) are the initiators in others.

After having examined the part played by the structure of the political system and by the actors in shaping government-party relationships, this paper will therefore investigate the ways in which these relationships may vary according to policy fields. Throughout the analysis the three levels referred to earlier have to be taken into account, these levels being the composition of governments and of party elites, the distribution of favours and patronage, and, of course, policy-making and elaboration. Only a thorough investigation of all these elements can provide a comprehensive picture of the way in which and the extent to which the various factors which we are examining here play a part in shaping government-party relationships. Not surprisingly, such a comprehensive picture is likely to be complex rather than simple and blurred rather than clear-cut; in many cases, its characteristics will be contradictory rather than consistent.

The national institutional framework and its effect on government-party relationships

Let us turn first to the most general elements in the political system which are likely to affect the pattern of government-party relationships: these are the national

institutions and specifically those which are defined and given authority by the constitution. Surprisingly perhaps at first sight, but in reality most logically, the effect of these national institutional arrangements is to reduce the impact of relationships between governments and parties and, at the limit, to weaken them so much that they become almost insignificant.

One of the main reasons why parties exist is in order to provide links between the people and the government; these links can have an upward direction if parties have primarily a representative character or have a downward direction if they have mainly a 'mobilising' character. This is to say that, where parties emerge from the people, so to speak, and are allowed to develop naturally and freely, they will attempt to supervise, and at the limit to control the government; on the other hand, parties may be set up and closely directed by an executive which attempts to strengthen its influence in the country. Yet, in both cases, as well as in (fairly common) intermediate situations, the outcome is the establishment of a close relationship between government and supporting parties. Thus, if constitutional and other national institutional arrangements do not 'interfere' with the process of government-party relationships, so to speak, the development of parties will coincide with a large amount of interdependence between government and supporting parties.

This is why the effect of national institutions on government-party relationships will tend to be characterised by a

reduction in the strength of the links which might have existed otherwise. National institutional arrangements, and especially constitutional arrangements, tend to give authority to the bodies which are set up through them. These bodies acquire as a result (or at least can be expected to acquire, if the national institutional arrangements are legitimate), enough influence to give their members and in particular their leaders the ability to act on their own, to an extent at least: those leaders then do not need the support of (or do not need much support from) other bodies to see their decisions accepted and ultimately implemented. Parties, may not be superfluous, but they are no longer a requirement. This is not the whole story, admittedly, as the leaders of each national institution will attempt to exercise influence on the leaders of other national institutions and may use supporting parties in order to do so. The game which is played is therefore the following: on the one hand, the national institutions establish various decision-making bodies and give authority to these bodies in order to enable them to exercise their powers; on the other, each of these bodies attempts to undermine the autonomy of other decision-making bodies and the party is one of the main means used to achieve this aim.

Naturally, the game will end to the advantage of a particular institution if the other institutions have little authority. In a more subtle manner, it will also end to the advantage of one institution if all the institutions set up by the constitution are dependent on each other: in such a case, one

institution may be able to use the party to establish its dominance. Thus, in traditional 'constitutional' monarchies, such as Britain before the Reform Acts or Morocco after independence, the monarchy is the strongest institution, while the legislature is weak; moreover, the executive can exercise direct influence on the legislature: the party is typically the mechanism used by the executive to control the legislature. A similar trend can be found in 'authoritarian' or 'charismatic' presidential systems, which are the republican equivalent of traditional constitutional monarchies. In these cases, the party helps the president to curb the possible influence of other institutional bodies, and in particular the legislature.

The situation is different in 'constitutional' presidential systems: in these, government-party relationships are reduced in scope because the authority of both executive and legislature are strong while the sources of this authority are distinct. This is particularly the case in the United States, which is the only constitutional presidential system having lasted for long periods without a hiatus; but similar trends can be noticed in Latin American constitutional presidential systems. In parliamentary systems, on the other hand, since there is no strict separation between executive and legislature, a link has to develop but this link has to be informal: there is therefore greater scope for government-party relationships to be tight, the role of these relationships being in the first instance to constitute a bridge between government and parliament.

Government-party relationships operate therefore in presidential systems under the following constraints: 1) there can be autonomy or interdependence but, if there is interdependence, the government, not the party, is the dominant element; 2) presidential dominance will tend to occur in authoritarian or charismatic presidential systems; 3) in 'constitutional' presidential systems, party and government tend to be autonomous from each other.

If there is autonomy between government and party, however, there is also a danger that the system will not function: in such a case, the executive is not in a position to use the party to curb the legislature or vice-versa. Deadlock will only be averted or overcome if one of three conditions is met. The first consists in tightening government-party relationships and in making the system function more like a parliamentary system or an authoritarian presidential system: this seems to occur in some constitutional presidential arrangements, for instance in Costa Rica or in Venezuela. The second solution consists in organising a vast system of compromises based on trade-offs which will result in the setting-up of different areas of dominance for the various actors; this solution is particularly likely to occur where the parties are markedly decentralised (and in particular in federal systems): in such a case, it becomes difficult to refer to a real or complete 'autonomy' of the actors; yet these are not 'dependent' or even 'interdependent' either. What is being set up

is a series of limited, but none the less important semi-autonomous spheres of action: such a situation corresponds broadly to that of the contemporary United States. The third solution is simply the end of this particular form of presidential rule, an outcome which has occurred periodically in competitive Latin American political systems; this is indeed why the dangers inherent in constitutional presidential systems are stressed in the literature (2).

We have discussed so far the possible effect on government-party relationships of constitutional and other arrangements at the central level of the State; these relationships are also affected by the vertical division of powers between centre and regions. The effect is to a large extent indirect, however, in that it affects primarily the distribution of power within the parties and, in this way, the ability of the party to influence the executive. Thus truly decentralised polities also display highly decentralised characteristics at the level of parties: this is the case of the United States, of Canada, of Switzerland; in those federal systems which are not truly decentralised, on the other hand, such as those of Austria, Argentina, or Venezuela, the structure of the political parties appears not to be markedly affected either by the constitutional arrangements: the effect of these arrangements on government-party relationships is correspondingly also more limited.

Where they have an effect, national institutional arrangements may affect government-party relationships at all three levels. They can affect policy-making in that, where the government is relatively autonomous from the party, that is to say primarily in constitutional presidential systems, the scope for governmental initiatives is large, but such initiatives may also be blocked since the party and the legislature are also autonomous; in constitutional presidential systems, too, the composition of the governmental and party elites is affected, as both the government and the parties are relatively free from each other's interference. On the contrary, in other forms of presidential systems and in parliamentary systems, both policy-making and personnel composition are markedly affected by government-party relationships: in authoritarian presidential systems, the government dominates; in parliamentary systems, the situation varies and it depends largerly, as we shall see shortly, on the party system and on party characteristics. Finally, while government-party relationships tend to be manifest at the level of favours and advantages in most systems, they are particularly large in presidential systems as they seem to compensate for the lack of autonomy of the party (in the case of presidential systems of the authoritarian variety) and for the distance between government and party (in the case of presidential systems of the constitutional variety). The situation is more mixed in parliamentary systems where, on this point too, the party system and the structure of the parties appear to be the key factors.

National institutions thus play a part in establishing the setting within which government and parties relate to each other. By and large, they constitute primarily a force against the parties playing a large part rather than a force helping to streamline government-party relationships; this is partly because these national institutions have been set up, in Western countries at least, before parties became well-established, indeed at a time when parties were often regarded with considerable suspicion. Thus, while not disregarding the effect of national institutions on government-party relationships and indeed their strong (but negative) effect in the relatively exceptional case of constitutional presidential systems, we need to turn to party systems and to party characteristics to discover other important ways in which these relationships develop.

Party systems and their effect on government-party relationships

The effect of party systems on government-party relationships is large, but it is primarily indirect: it is not the party system as such which has an effect on the relationships, but the fact that the governmental structure and the decision-making processes are likely to be affected by the existence of a given party system in the country. This indirect effect is particularly marked in systems which are both parliamentary and of more than one party as the impact of the characteristics of the party system is then fully felt, essentially because the government may be of one party or have to be a coalition; in

presidential systems and/or where there is a single party system, on the contrary, the effect is to an extent conditioned by the characteristics of the presidential system, as we saw in the previous section, or, as we shall see in the next section, it depends primarily on the internal characteristics of the parties, as single party systems vary markedly in structure, social base, and ideology.

However, although the main underlying element is constituted by the internal characteristics of the party in single party systems, these variations take place in the context of a high level of interdependence, for single party systems are typically set up in order to help strengthen the government's hold over the country. In most cases at least, the single party is conceived (or at least is conceived when it is set up) as having a mobilising character: its closeness to the government is therefore axiomatic; it may even be a euphemism to say that the party is close to the government, as there is likely to be full interpenetration between the two bodies.

Moreover, interpenetration does not mean reciprocal influence: on the whole, there is either marked government dominance (in the majority of cases) or marked party dominance (in a minority of situations). The first case corresponds to single party systems set up by powerful leaders, normally in the context of authoritarian presidential systems: the party is then the arm (and often the eyes and ears) of the president; such single party

systems are found in many Black African countries, for instance. For the party to be dominant, on the contrary, party structures have to be strong and to have been implanted by leaders anxious to establish the predominance of that party: this has been traditionally the case in most Communist countries, but almost exclusively in these countries, as only there has the party fully exercised the function of a 'transmission belt'. Changes which occurred in the late 1980s suggest that there may no longer be party dominance even in some of the States which remained Communist, and in particular in the Soviet Union.

In parliamentary systems, on the other hand, (as well as occasionally in constitutional presidential systems when there is close relationship between executive and supporting party, as in Costa Rica), differences among party systems have a direct impact on the party composition of governments and it is this difference in party composition which has in turn an effect on the relationship between governments and supporting parties. Subject to empirical verification, one can distinguish among three broad situations. In single party majority governments, typically to be found in two-party systems or in systems of more than two parties but where one party is dominant, as in Sweden and, in earlier decades, Norway as well as, outside Western Europe, for a long period at least, India, there is a close relationship between government and supporting party; this relationship seems to operate by and large to the benefit of the government and in particular of its leader. The variations which one can trace seem

to stem primarily from the characteristics of parties and from the nature of the leadership: they will be examined in the coming sections. The case of a dominant partner in a coalition in which there is a dominant party is somewhat analogous, as German and French Fifth Republic examples indicate.

The second situation is that of the minority single party government and of the dominant party in a minority coalition dominated by one party, a situation which has occurred frequently in Denmark and occasionally in Norway. Relations between government and parties supporting the coalition are close, whether the parties are or not represented in the government: but there is no dominance by the executive and much of policy-making is on the basis of trade-offs. Paradoxically, the government may be more autonomous in terms of policy-making vis-a-vis the party or parties represented in the government than vis-a-vis the party or parties supporting it from outside, though these parties have of course no or very little impact on the composition of the government (3).

Third, in other types of coalitions, there is a high degree of party dominance, as can be seen by the cases of Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, as well as, for long periods at least, Austria. Variations in the extent of party dominance appear to stem from the characteristics of the parties and of the leadership.

Relations between governments and supporting parties take place, as we pointed out, at three levels, those of policy elaboration, of governmental and party elite composition, and of favours and patronage distribution: the effect of the party system on these relationships is not the same for the three types of situations which we have identified. At the level of policy-elaboration, single party majority governments and coalitions with a dominant party are characterised by a substantial amount of governmental influence, especially over time. A party comes to office with a programme, typically adopted by the party executive or the national conference; but the government retains some room for manoeuvre in interpreting the programme. Moreover, the government is likely to have gradually more influence; it is also likely to play a considerable part in the elaboration of the subsequent electoral programme. Governmental dominance in the policy field is thus substantial and tends to grow.

Both the impact and the evolution are similar with respect to the extent and direction of influence over the composition of the government and of the top party elite: originally, members of the government emerge from the party, and indeed from senior elements in the party: the party can thus be regarded as dominant at that point; but, first, the party leader typically exercise a substantial amount of discretion; second, he or she can normally also exercise some influence on appointments at the top of the party, though the extent of this influence varies from party to party. Thus one can refer to a <u>fusion</u> between

governmental and party elite membership, a fusion which, however, tends over time to work to the benefit of the government rather to that of the party elite. In parliamentary systems in which a single party has a majority, government leaders are more restricted in their choices than American presidents: there is no or very little autonomy from the party. There is an equilibrium, however, and this seems to turn over time to the advantage of the government, especially if that government survives one or more elections.

Finally, single party majority governments are probably characterised by and large by a relatively low level of distribution of favours and patronage: the cohesion of the party and the party character of the electoral contests make it unnecessary for the government and the top party leadership to place much emphasis on individual favours. Single party majority governments are thus on the whole government-led and the party's influence tends to become more restricted or more sporadic while governmental pressure increases over time. This creates discontent occasionally in the party, however: revolts may even lead to the fall of the government or at least of its leader.

Coalition systems have almost the opposite characteristics. The composition of the government is typically decided by the party while the government has at most very little say in the composition of the top party elite: ministers are often selected by party leaders outside the government and the names are

transmitted to the new prime minister. Second, patronage is often widespread, though this may be further reinforced (or reduced) as a result of the specific power relationships within the coalition parties. By and large, however, coalition governments tend to need to - or wish to - provide benefits to many of their supporters at various levels. Finally, the coalition parties appear also to have a major influence on governmental policy. This influence is indeed often formalised by means of a governmental compact, often very detailed, by which the parties determine in advance the line which the government is to take on most, if not all, issues; none the less, governments probably always find 'holes' in the compact and thus at least elaborate some policies which the parties may subsequently endorse or on which they may choose to remain silent. Yet, by and large - and as much in a negative as in a positive sense (by not allowing the government to do things as much as by inducing it to act in a certain way), parties are influential in coalition arrangements.

The case of minority single party (or minority coalition) governments is intermediate. First, only the party (or parties) represented in the government play a part in determining the composition of that government: there is thus only partial party influence at this level. Second, with respect to policy elaboration, what begins by a substantial amount of party dominance (including by the parties supporting the government from outside) seems to be slowly replaced by some governmental initiative, indeed even some governmental autonomy, partly

reminiscent of constitutional presidential systems: the government proposes some policies and discovers later whether there is support for these policies among the coalition partners. Party dominance appears therefore to be only partial: an 'arms length' situation prevails. Finally, the level of distribution of patronage and favours seems relatively low, in part because the position of the government is rather ambiguous vis-a-vis the supporting parties.

The single party majority, coalition, or minority character of the government has thus a considerable impact of the nature of the relationship between the government and the supporting parties: since governments are structured in this manner, in parliamentary systems at least, largely because of the party system, it seems therefore justified to claim that the party system has an important, even if indirect effect on government-party relationships. While single party governments can be expected to dominate or at least to lead political life, if not perhaps when the government is formed and during the early moments of its life, but at least later on, coalitions remain markedly under the tutelage of their 'godfathers', a tutelage which can be exercised in many cases at the three levels at which parties and governments interact. The somewhat shaky character of minority governments, on the other hand, places these only in parttial dependence and they may even display, for a while at least, a degree of autonomy, although this autonomy may not prove long-lasting.

Party structure and ideology and its impact on government-party relationships

Three aspects need to be taken into account in order to assess the internal characteristics of parties: these are the social base from which the party emerged, the structure of the party and its links with other bodies (trade unions for instance), and the ideology of the party. The most obvious impact is indeed that of the ideology, as parties of the Left are more likely to want to intervene in the life of the government which they support than parties of the Right: parties of the Left consider such an 'interference' as a manifestation of 'democracy' and of participation. This impact manifests itself both with respect to the composition of the government and with respect to policy-making; it is less apparent with respect to patronage and favours, as parties of the Left, which 'should' be against these, appear in fact often to need them to maintain the unity of the party: they may then justify these favours by suggesting that the faithful deserve to receive these rewards because of their work for the society. Yet, while the direction of the impact of ideology is clear, its real strength is not ostensibly very large, in Western Europe at least: this is perhaps because of the decrease in the ideological distance between the parties which are effective contenders for government membership.

Second, the social base of the party has an impact on government-party relationships, but more to distinguish the

parties which have an extensive social base from those which do not: the latter tend to be set up by leaders who wish to impose their rule on the nation; the former are composed on the one hand of the 'representative' parties on the Western model, and, on the other, of those authoritarian parties, and in particular those dominant single parties, which have extensive support in a part at least of the population: thus Communist parties did have an extensive social base in some of the countries which they ruled; so did some fascist parties.

It is difficult to assess the direction and the strength of the impact of an extensive social base on government-party relationships. Extensive authoritarian parties are set up in order to increase the dominant role of the leadership, but this can be the leadership of the party (in the case of many Communist parties) or of the government (extensive parties of the authoritarian Right). 'Representative' parties are likely to attempt to influence governments, on the whole; but the fact that they have a large social base does not automatically give them influence, as they may be so decentralised and indeed so divided that they are unable to affect the government as parties; it is elements in their midst which put pressure and may have influence: this is the case, for instance, with American parties. Thus when parties have a large social base, governments and parties are probably more interdependent than when the social base is limited; but the forms, characteristics, and even extent of this greater interdependence can vary markedly. Moreover, the fact that parties

have a large social base has probably as much of an effect on the amount of patronage distributed than on policy-making and even perhaps more than on the composition of the government.

The impact of the party structure on government-party relationships is profound, but complex: at the limit, as we noted in a previous paper, party structures can be regarded as being the main elements to be taken into consideration in order to 'define' parties (4): for party structures help to determine the extent of party cohesion. In theory at least, parties could be plotted along a dimension ranging from total unity to such divisions that there is an almost infinite number of decision-making centres.

At the 'cohesive' end of the dimension are those parties where decisions are taken primarily at the top, though there may be some consultation of the rank-and-file. Close to that end of the continuum are parties with two power centres, admittedly partly overlapping, these being the parliamentary group and the national executive.

Somewhat less cohesive parties are of two types, factionalised or geographically-divided. Party factions may be ideological or personalised; geographical divisions may be due to liguistic, ethnic, or religious minorities or to differences in the socio-economic characteristics of the areas concerned; they may also have a personalised element. In both factionhalised and geographically divided parties, decisions taken by the centre are

likely to be opposed by a substantial proportion of the local leaders; united party positions may not be adopted on some matters.

So long as the factional or geographical lines are clear-cut and therefore predictable, a degree of cohesion remains; compromises may be thrashed out and indeed respected, at least if the party wishes to appear to function as a decision-making unit. This is not the case at the other end of the dimension, as parties are then composed of large numbers of small groups taking different views on most issues: in such cases, coalitions then emerge haphazard and are extremely fragile. At the limit, the party ceases to exist in all but in name.

The effect of these differences in structure on government-party relationships is complex, as two movements have to be taken into account. On the one hand, the more cohesion the party displays, the more it is able to exercise influence as a party; but, on the other, the more the party displays cohesion, the more the government is able to influence the whole party by controlling the top of the organisation. Cohesion is thus a key issue in that only where it exists can one truly refer to influence and at the limit to dominance of either the party on the government or of the government on the party; but the other key issue is whether the government controls the central power positions in the party or whether it does not.

The answer to this second question is given, as we saw earlier, by the party system. Assuming party cohesion, where there is single party majority government, there will tend to be fusion between party and government and this situation turns to the benefit of the government; where there is single-party minority government or where there is a coalition government, this fusion does not exist: the main decision centre of the party remains outside the government and the party is the beneficiary.

At the other extreme of the range, where there is no party cohesion at all, there is no real opportunity for either party dominance or for government dominance. There is then autonomy for the government and for the party; indeed it is not so much the party as such which is autonomous, since this expression covers little reality in such a case; the autonomous agents are the party 'chieftains' who can exercise influence, often because they are members of the legislature. Such a situation has its dangers, not only because little policy-making is likely to be achieved, but because the composition and consequently the existence of the government may be continuously in question, as was the situation in the French Fourth Republic. The parliamentary system seems ineffective when parties have these characteristics: it ultimately collapses or it has to be streamlined. Constitutional presidential systems function better, as there is governmental autonomy at the level of the composition of the executive and the executive may be (but is not always) rather stable (5).

If we move back in the direction of the cohesion end of the range, two positions on that dimension are particularly interesting. One is that of the party with well-defined factions: such a party can be regarded as constituting a coalition: what has been found to apply to coalitions also applies to these cases. Thus governmental composition is markedly influenced by the party while governmental policy-making is partly under party influence, although a substantial degree of governmental autonomy remains; patronage and favours are distributed on a large scale: the Italian Christian Democrats and the Japanese Liberal Democrats are examples of such situations. The other type of relatively cohesive party is that in which power is divided between the parliamentary group and the party in the country: if the two bodies are in agreement, there is no difficulty; but, if they are in conflict, the government will be under attack from one of them and will need support: in most cases this will come from the parliamentary group which will benefit from the situation and exercise as a result some influence on policy-making and, indirectly at least, on the composition of the government; favours and patronage are not extensive, as the cohesion of the party is high.

Internal party characteristics thus play a substantial part in determining whether government or party dominates the relationship between the two bodies, although these party characteristics have in most cases to be considered jointly with the party system, in the same way as the effect of the party system has to be examined jointly with the impact of internal

party characteristics, and in particular with the level of party cohesion. Thus, while it may be to the advantage of the government and of the party that the cohesion of the party be improved, such a cohesion can also mean that the one who gains from the improved cohesion may not be the one who pushes most strongly for it. In this respect in particular, the members of the political elite can have a large part to play: we need therefore to turn to that part to complete the picture of the general factors affecting government-party relationships.

The role of governmental and party leaders in strengthening government-party relationships

Major controversies have arisen and continue to arise about the role of leaders of other key actors in political life (6). These controversies are fuelled by the fact that, while the role of these actors appears ostensibly to be large, it is clearly also boosted or depressed by some, if not all, of the factors which we have described so far. Thus the presidential system, more than the parliamentary system, gives the chief executive the opportunity to lead the government in an autonomous manner; thus there is greater likelihood that a strong leader will emerge in single party government than in coalition government, where compromises and arbitration are the essential qualities required of the prime minister; thus, too, centralised parties with a high degree of cohesion are likely to have strong leaders while decentralised parties are ruled by oligarchies. If leadership is

to be regarded as being a separate factor in the determination of government-party relationships, it must be shown to have a part to play over and above the effect which the factors which we have just described may have on leadership.

Let us therefore examine what the impact of leaders on government-party relationships may be by considering the resources which these leaders may have in different situations. One can distinguish among three types of leaders, government leaders who are not party leaders, party leaders who are not government leaders, and leaders who are both government and party leaders. The first type can be found in a variety of situations, ranging from presidential chief executives who came to power on the basis of popular, rather than party support to heads of governments appointed by a president elected by popular vote (French prime ministers in the Fifth Republic, for instance) and to prime ministers in a coalition context. These leaders may have widely different resources, but they all have the same objective, namely to strengthen the role of the government over that of the party. They are therefore likely to stress one or both of two elements, the need for national cohesion and the managerial or technical role of the government. On both grounds, these leaders will attempt to move government-party relationships away from interdependence and in the direction of greater autonomy. The move is likely to be more successful in (constitutional) presidential systems than in parliamentary systems, but it will take place also in parliamentary systems, as this is the context within which the

leadership of someone who is a government leader, but not a party leader, can be maximised.

Second, party leaders who are not government leaders naturally have the oppposite objective, namely to ensure that the interdependence between government and party is maximised and that this interdependence is exercised to the benefit of the party. A prerequisite is naturally that the party be cohesive: the first aim of such leaders is therefore to bring about cohesion to their organisation if this is lacking. Moreover, party leaders are also unlikely to be able to exercise strong influence over coalition governments dominated by a party whose leader is also leader of the government, especially if this party has great cohesion. The most favourable situation for these party leaders is therefore that of a coalition government composed of parties which are relatively equal and none of whose leaders are in the government, but there are also favourable opportunities for such leaders when the dominant party is not cohesive.

Party leaders exercise their influence indirectly, largely through the ministers of their party whose appointments they typically control. Policy matters may thus come to be removed from the governmental area and sent to the party leaders for adjudication. There are limits to the influence of party leaders in these coalition situations, however, these limits being provided by the leaders of the other coalition parties. The leader of the government may be able to profit from these divisions.

The power of party leaders in coalition situations rests ultimately on manipulation and on the threat to bring down the government, a threat which can only be used sparingly if it is to have an effect, however.

Third, those who are both government and party leaders appear naturally prima facie to have the greatest resources, since they can in principle use party influence and yet also take a 'national' posture. This situation tends to occur in single party governments: but leaders can exploit this situation more or less. Indeed, they have the choice between two options: they can push government-party relationships in the direction of governmental dominance, though this may lead to discontent in the party; alternatively, they can attempt to realise an equilibrium between party and government by balancing the 'political' demands of the party against the 'technical' demands of the government. This strategy is almost certainly the most effective in the long run, the effect of such an action being to move government-party relationships towards a position of interdependence.

Moreover, the question needs to be examined in a time dimension, since leadership grows and decays, although the conditions of this growth and decay are not well documented, let alone measured. It is not certain that 'new' leaders are stronger than old leaders (7); in particular, it is not certain that new leaders can easily shrug off, during their first years in office, either the party programme or the pressure which the party may

exercise on governmental composition. It seems on the contrary that government leaders may be able to grow and to acquire more autonomy or more influence on party policies and on the composition of the party elite. This does not always occur, admittedly; moreover, leaders come to experience decline after a number of years in office, although the exact shape of the curve is not known, largely because the matter has remained so far almost wholly unexplored.

Government leaders who are not party leaders benefit most if they can move government-party relationships towards some greater degree of autonomy; those who are party leaders without being government leaders benefit most if they succeed in strengthening the dependence of the government; and those who are both government and party leaders would seem to have a more secure position if they can establish a degree of interdependence between government and parties. Yet leaders may not be able to achieve these goals, even after a period, let alone immediately. Thus leaders seem able to play a significant part in determining the shape of government-party relationships. It might not be possible to measure the precise extent of their influence, but the examination of a number of cases should at least begin to provide an impression of what this influence is likely to be in specific situations.

Policy fields and government-party relationships

So far, we looked at government-party relationships in bulk rather than in detail: yet one needs to go beyond general assessments and examine specific policies, for parties may not be able or willing to 'interfere' to the same extent with respect to all fields of government: in foreign affairs, for instance, party intervention is reltatively rare. Governments may therefore have to be regarded as more or less autonomous, depending on the types of policies in which they are engaged.

It seems indeed ostensibly true that governments are less subjected to party pressure in some fields than in others: what is not clear, however, is whether this is a matter of the fields themselves or is primarily due to differences in process and chaacteristics of the decision. Ostensibly at least, what seems important is whether a problem is highly controversial politically or not, for instance. Thus, in the case of foreign affairs, issues related to the European Community have been hotly debated in most Western European parties; the same has been true, in some countries at least and in particular in Britain, of issues related to nuclear disarmament.

The root of the problem seems to stem from the fact that governments and parties have a different raison d'etre. Governments have to 'run the country'; they have to ensure that the administration functions and that the nation is defended. The

elaboration of new policies takes place in a context in which 'ordinary' administration tends to crowd innovations out. Parties, on the other hand, at least if they have independent views on policies (and 'mobilising' parties often do not have such views since they are typically dependent on the government), have intrinsically different priorities from those of governments. Far from being concerned with general administration, they are mostly interested in policies at the most general levels and at the individual level: they attempt to innovate, on the one hand and, on the other, they take up grievances from members or want to distribute favours. Moreover, while governments are often concerned with rather technical issues, parties are concerned primarily with broad political and social matters. Finally, while governments have often to take quick decisions, parties tend to have slow decision making procedures.

These fundamental differences in the activities of governments and parties explain why there may be conflicts between the two types of bodies; they explain also why there may be a substantial area of autonomy of governments. Specifically, governments are markedly involved in three types of situations in which parties are on the contrary often reluctant to be involved. One of these situations is represneted by emergencies. These take much of time and energy of government, often in foreign affairs, but also in home affairs, for instance in the economic field. Parties are usually reluctant or are unable to be involved unless the matter is politically explosive; in most emergency

situations, they are satisfied to make general statements and leave the government to decide.

Second, much of what the government does has a technical character, as we said: parties are ill-equipped to deal with these matters which are also sometimes regarded by parties as excuses used by governments to undermine or even subvert the objectives which these parties wish to achieve. Yet technical considerations run across a wide range of governmental affairs, although they are primarily dominant in the fields of foreign affairs and economics, while being also important in those aspects of social policy in which legal considerations are central. This correspondingly tends to reduce the area in which parties truly exercise influence.

Third, governments are concerned with questions which are either politically non-controversial or which cut across party positions. This is especially the case with matter of implementation. These issues may be regarded as secondary by parties; yet they do occupy much of the time of ministers and obviously cannot be left aside. Administrative matters are, as we indicated earlier, the stuff of government: parties know that governments are there to run the bureaucracy and they indeed complain if civil servants appear to be in control; yet political control cannot be achieved unless ministers are immersed in administrative life. These are therefore able to acquire some autonomy at this level by default, though on this, too, parties may be somewhat resentful.

The extent of autonomy or of interdependence is thus likely to vary markedly according to different types of governmental activities, if not perhaps specifically according to governmental fields. Party involvement in policy development will therefore range from strongly pressed for initiatives to a total absence of reaction. At one end of the dimension are the policy proposals which are presented in the party electoral programme, provided these proposals are truly drafted by the party and not inserted by the government in the first instance: initiatives which are strongly pressed for by the parties are the true means by which parties attempt to ensure that the government acts on their behalf. These initiatives stand alongside measures which the party may have mentioned, but without much enthusiasm, alongside measures which the government proposes and the party endorses or at least does not object to, and, at the extreme end of the range, alongside measures on which the party has no opinion. Almost certainly, matters concerned with emergencies, technical matters, and matters which are politically non-controversial or which cut across party lines fall within this last category. Thus, between the policy fields or problems where parties and governments truly intersect and those where the government is autonomous, there is a substantial area of 'semi-autonomy' in which the government can act in large part because parties are not organised to be involved in these matters and indeedo not wish to be involved in them.

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The factors affecting government-party relationships are complex and interlocking. Parties have been set up, in many Western countries at least, to ensure that governments implement programmes which the people is presumed to prefer. In the course of the development of 'party government', not only have there been parties which were unwilling to bring about change, but governments have also been involved in many activities in which parties could not be or did not wish to be truly concerned. Naturally enough, the desire to see parties exercising real pressure on governments persists, since this is a requirement if representative government is to be achieved; but one needs also to discover in what ways and on what matters party pressure on government can be most effective as well as the areas in which this pressure is unlikely to play a large part. Systematic empirical inquiries are therefore needed in order to find out the role of the factors which have been described here. A better understanding of the different situations which will result from these inquiries will then help to throw light on the extent to which 'party government' truly exists and on the extent to which, in this way, representative government is also achieved.

NOTES

1. See the paper entitled 'A Model for the Analysis of Government-Party Relationships'.

2. See for instance J. Linz, 'The Perils of Presidentialism', Journal of Democracy, Winter 1990, pp. 51-69.

3. See in particular K. Strom, 'Deferred Gratification and Minority Governments in Scandinavia', Legislative Studies Quarterly, (11), 4, November 1986, pp. 583-605.

4. See the paper entitled 'Governments and Supporting Parties: Distinctions and Definitions'.

5. The ministerial personnel may have a very high turnover in presidential systems: this was the case for instance in Chile between 1945 and 1973.

6. For a summary of these controversies, see my Political Leadership (1986), London and Los Angeles: Sage, passim.

7. The particular strength of new leaders was stressed by V. Bunce, Do New Leaders Make a Difference?, (1981), Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

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